Taking a Snapshot of Early Childhood Response to Intervention Across the United States: 2009 and 2010

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Abstract

The Response to Intervention (RTI) approach to assessment and service delivery is becoming common in elementary schools nationally and its prevalence is increasing nationwide. Less common however, is an RTI approach to early childhood education and early intervention. This study examines the extent that states are beginning to implement and/or take steps toward implementation of RTI in early childhood programs. This poster reports findings from national surveys in 2009 and 2010 regarding state's progress implementing preschool RTI.

Introduction

The RTI approach in elementary schools nationally is increasing common (Berkeley, Bender, Peaster, & Saunders, 2009). They reported that 15 states have adopted an RTI model with 9 implementing on a large scale. 4 states in small scale, and 1 state not yet implementing RTI. In 2010, this same population of knowledgeable state leaders was surveyed. Additionally, State Head Start Collaboration Office Directors were surveyed. A MS-EXCEL dataset containing the set respondents records including written comments was downloaded from the website and analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and graphical displays.

Research Questions

1. To what extent is the RTI approach being implemented nationally as reported by:
   - A. State Title I (Early Childhood Special Education) and Pre-K Directors?
   - B. State Head Start Directors?
2. In what types of early childhood programs is RTI currently being implemented?
3. What are the reported challenges to implementing RTI in early childhood settings?
4. What was the reported status of National Early Childhood RTI Implementation?

Methods

Sample

The 2009 sample of knowledgeable state early childhood special education leaders who were surveyed included IDEA-Part B (619) directors, and state PreK directors. All were surveyed in order to gather findings to the USA. In all, 57 responded.

In 2010, this same population of knowledgeable state leaders were surveyed. Additionally, State Head Start Collaboration Office Directors also were surveyed. A listing of these leaders in each state and territory and their contact information was obtained from the NECTAC website (online at http://www.nectac.org) contact@nectac.org. In total 73 responded.

Measurement and Procedures

An item survey (2009) and two 14-item surveys (2010) were developed based on brief reviews of the literature, expert feedback, discussions among colleagues, and analysis of 2009 survey responses to determine relevant questions. The first 2009 survey was sent to the IDEA-Part B (619) directors, and state PreK directors. The second was sent to the Head Start leaders, and it was sent to Head Start Collaboration Office Directors. However, items from both surveys collected the same information.

Measurement and Procedures

Following several demographic information items (i.e., name, state, role,position), the first 2009 survey was a multiple choice question where choices were based on previous research and policy instruments. For example, there was a multiple choice question asking details about the early learning settings implementation was taking place, in what areas of curriculum it was focused, which RTI components were included, and which curriculum, progress monitoring tools, instructional decision-making models were being used. If a respondent indicated that they did not know what was occurring, the respondent was directed to a question about the survey regarding RTI challenges, skipping the implementation item. The RTI challenges question contained 7 statements reflecting seven of the IDEA RTI implementation challenges. Each question was rated on a five level Likert scale ranging from “I have No Challenge” to “Significant Challenge.” Separating these two extremes were “Some Challenge” and “Moderate Challenge” values. The final survey question (2010 only) asked respondents to indicate concerns about the implementation of RTI in early education settings and included options such as: “lack of professional development, lack of staff, unclear policy, delay in services, lack of funding, infrastructure or state standards,” as well as offering the option of open ended comments.

Surveys were accessed by respondents through an email link that directed the survey form for complete. Following this first email, 151 coordinators received a second email reminder to complete the survey, followed by a third email reminder 2 weeks later by individual phone contact. In the case of the Head Start survey, following the initial email, a second email reminder was followed by individual phone contact. In all, 2009 data was received representing 44 entries (40 states and Washington, DC, 3 territories, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs). 2010 data represented 49 entries (46 states and Washington, DC, and 3 territories). A MS-EXCEL database containing the set respondents records including written comments was downloaded from the website and analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and graphical displays.

Discussion

Results indicate that in 2010 states were reporting progress towards implementing preschool RTI in PreK and ECSE programs compared to 2009. The 2010 HS survey findings were similar to the PreK and ECSE report however, where some ECSE and PreK states have RTI policies, HS has no specific policies. Most RTI implementation is occurring in ECSE, State PreK, Head Start, and Blended Funding Programs. The greatest challenges reported were untrained staff, limited resources, lack of knowledge, and lack of Tier 2 and 3 intervention strategies. Most report implementing a multi-tiered system of support-based Tier 1. The most significant of states report not yet having RTI models that can be shared with others. Clearly, early childhood RTI is of interest by just beginning to be practiced.

Results

What was the Reported Status of National Early Childhood RTI Implementation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>IDEA-Part B (619) directors</th>
<th>Head Start Collaboration Office Directors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>10% vs. 30%</td>
<td>20% vs. 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>20% vs. 40%</td>
<td>40% vs. 60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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References
